

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT: WORLD REFUGEE DAY

20 June 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic and protests against racism are reminders of our common humanity. Each of us are born with human dignity and we all have responsibilities to ensure that no one is left behind. On World Refugee Day this year, we re-affirm that “every action counts” in times of crisis. Everyone, including refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons, can contribute to finding solutions. Indeed, an inclusive response is essential to supporting recovery and promoting justice.

There have not been any confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Thailand refugee camps nor amongst internally displaced communities in south eastern Myanmar as yet. However, increased restrictions on movement have undermined the food security of host communities and displaced persons alike.

TBC has raised an additional US\$ 1.9 million to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 on refugees in Thailand. All refugees in camps currently receive the same value on the food card as previously afforded only to the most vulnerable households. Fundraising efforts continue to ensure food security in the short term, but the long-term challenges require political commitments.

Donor governments have also contributed an additional US\$ 250,000 for TBC to support community-driven responses to Covid-19 for people on the move in conflict-affected areas of south eastern Myanmar. This has informed remote communities about behaviours which control spread of the disease, supported ethnic health service providers monitor screening posts and quarantine centers and enabled food and cash distributions to communities suffering food shortages.

As the UN Secretary General recently commented, the current crisis presents an opportunity to reimagine human mobility. It is important to learn from the lesson that exclusion is costly and inclusion pays. An inclusive public health and socio-economic response is vital for controlling the virus, stimulating livelihoods, and promoting options beyond camps for displaced communities.

There will not be a single solution for refugees in Thailand, but multiple challenges to pursue. Expediting legal pathways for employment outside of camps offers potential for local employers, host communities, and refugees alike. Broadening support for return to include group resettlement in ethnic administered areas could likewise reinforce market linkages across conflict-lines. Meanwhile sustaining support for the residual caseload in refugee camps remains a humanitarian imperative.

World Refugee Day is a timely reminder for us all that every action counts in pursuit of solutions for people forced from their homes by conflict.